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RWU Students Place First, Second at National Analytics and Advertising Competitions

A third team representing the Gabelli School of Business placed in the top three at the national analytics competition



Members of one of the Analytics Club teams (from left to right) Robbie Blier '17, Madison McCormack '17 and Makayla D'Urso '17 working on their presentation. They placed first nationally in the data visualization category of the Association for Information Systems (AIS) Student Chapter Leadership Conference.

April 18, 2017 | Juan Siliezar

Editor's note: This story has been updated on Tuesday, April 18.

BRISTOL, R.I. – Three teams from the Mario J. Gabelli School of Business recently finished among the top three at two national business competitions, the Association for Information Systems (AIS) Student Chapter Leadership Conference and the National Student Advertising Competition (NSAC). One of the teams competing took home the top prize at the AIS Conference and another of the teams placed second at the district round of the NSAC.

Guided by faculty members Mark Brickley, Farbod Farhadi, Matt Gregg and Mark Wu, the business school's Analytics Club sent two teams of three to the AIS conference, where one of the teams placed first nationally and the other placed third nationally. Both teams were among the ten finalists for the AmerisourceBergen Analytics Challenge and presented recommendations for the

company's pharmacies to increase revenues at their front-end stores. The first-place team based their presentation on an analysis of data from AmerisourceBergen that items which best align with the company's mission will sell best in their pharmacies.

At the district round of the NSAC, an interdisciplinary class of 22 students from Geraldo Matos' Advertising Campaigns Practicum course presented a fully integrated advertising campaign developed for Tai Pei, a frozen Asian foods company that is looking to rebrand itself to connect with a millennial audience. They finished second in the competition. The advertising team conducted 1,551 research efforts to develop their strategy. On initial tests, the advertising team found the strategy they created performed up to 300 percent better with millennials than another of Tai Pei's campaigns.

The strong performances from all the competing teams built upon RWU's recent success in the two national business competitions, where students present to a panel of judges solutions to problems faced by real companies.

The Analytics Club team is made up of Robbie Blier '17, Makayla D'Urso '17 and Madison McCormack '17, who placed first nationally in the data visualization category. The second team is made up of sophomores Samantha Bilinsky, Samantha Kane and Kyle Leach, who placed third nationally in the data analysis category. The advertising team is made up Nick Barbaria, Kara Bickford, Justin Bradley, Chandler Capozzi, Julia Carter, Alexis Church, Jared Clough, Emily Crafts, Augie Dickinson, Melissa Foote, Kat Fried, Bridget Gillis, Chris Hanson, Taylor Hawes, Jillian Katz, Erica Koljonen, Ashley Lamontagne, Rachel Lehman, Alissa McGeehan, Mariana Tzitzouris, Kat Waters, Ally Weiner. Senior James Brennan, who is not in the class, helped the advertising team film, sound mix and edit the video ads they made for their presentation.



Members of Geraldo Matos' Advertising Campaigns Practicum course.

Published on April 13, 2017.

BRISTOL, R.I. – Three teams from the Mario J. Gabelli School of Business will put their business strategy skills to the test this week at two national business competitions where they will present solutions to problems faced by real companies. Two of the teams come from the business school's Analytics Club, which is guided by faculty members Mark Brickley, Farbod Farhadi, Matt Gregg and Mark Wu. The third team is an interdisciplinary class of 22 students from Geraldo Matos' Advertising Campaigns Practicum course.

The Association for Information Systems (AIS) Student Chapter Leadership Conference takes place from April 13 to 15 at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. The two three-person teams from the Analytics Club are among the ten finalists for the AmerisourceBergen Analytics Challenge where they will each present recommendations the company's pharmacies can take to increase revenues at their front-end stores. The recommendations are based on their analysis of data provided by the company. First place winners receive a \$2,000 prize.

Students from the advertising team travel to Endicott College in Boston, Massachusetts on April 14 for the district round of the National Student Advertising Competition (NSAC) where they will present a fully integrated advertising campaign developed for Tai Pei, a frozen Asian foods company that is looking to rebrand itself to connect with a millennial audience. Winners from this round will move on to the semi-final round.

The teams hope to build upon the success last year's teams found at the competitions, where a team from the Analytics Club placed second at the AIS Conference and the advertising team placed third at the district round of the NSAC.

"This is essentially consulting," said Mark Wu, assistant professor of finance and one of the three faculty members mentoring the Analytics Club. "With problems like this [companies usually] have outside consulting firms help them. Here we have the students doing that for them."

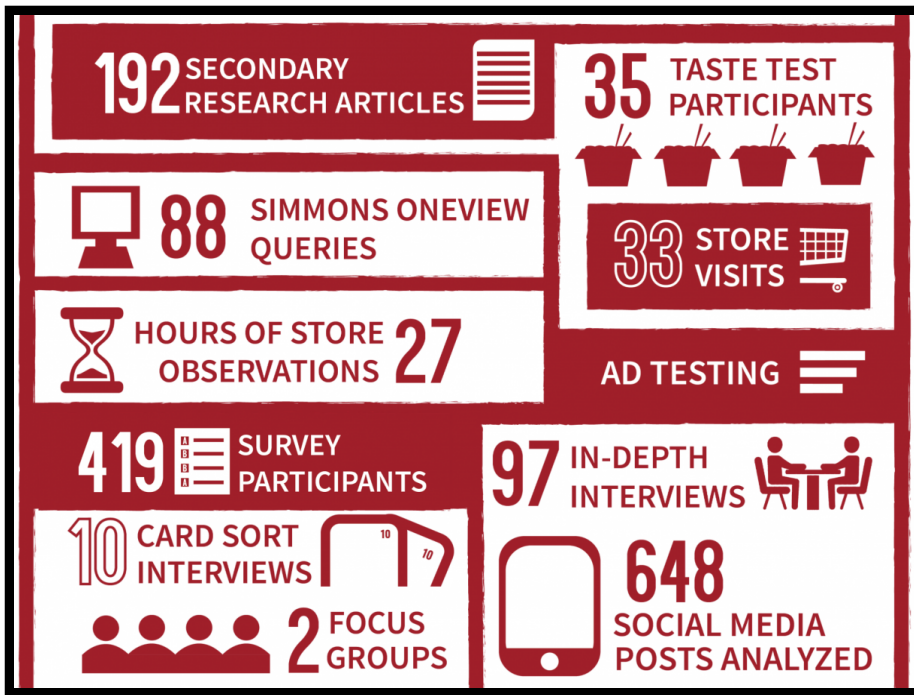
These students are learning by doing, said Matos, who's two-part course is built around the NSAC.

In that sense, students on the teams already have something to show for their efforts. The hands-on work they've done with real data sets and marketing dilemmas prepare them to enter the workforce ready to take on challenging, complex problems. Also, because the questions that come from AIS and NSAC are open-ended, students learn to take research-based approaches, analyze and think strategically to develop their business ideas – all traits favored by top organizations.

"[Having] the ability to be given almost nothing and then interpret it to ultimately aim to solve a business problem, I feel like that is arguably the most valuable skill you could have when entering the real world," Robbie Blier '17, a member of one of the analytics teams said.

Through their analysis, Blier and his team found that items which best align with AmerisourceBergen's mission sell best in their pharmacies. They based their recommendations on those findings.

The advertising team conducted 1,551 research efforts to develop their strategy to better connect Tai Pei with a millennial audience.



A summary of the 1,551 research efforts the advertising team conducted.

Through their research, the team concluded millennials are "doing all these adventures things but they aren't eating like it," said Taylor Hawes '17, a graphic design and marketing major. "So to fulfill this want for adventure we said let's create an angle so that we can pitch them an adventurous product."

From initial tests, the advertising team found the strategy they created performed up to 300 percent better with millennials than another of Tai Pei's campaigns.

If they or any of RWU's teams win, there is a significant chance that the companies will implement their strategies.

"How great would it be to be able to say you're just a student and you're able to add real impact to a large organization," Blier said.

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